

## “CHILDHOOD LEFT THE BRIGHTEST MEMORIES”: EARLY YEARS DESCRIBED IN THE AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF JEWISH FEMALE STUDENTS IN THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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**Abstract:** The article presents the childhood years of Jewish female students of the medical department of the Kyiv Higher Courses for Women, as described in their own autobiographies. The study of their autobiographical images of childhood reveals transformations in the relationships between parents and daughters in Jewish families in the modern period, the variability of the home upbringing of girls, and the obligatory component of their education. The admission of daughters to the educational institutions determined by their parents symbolized the end of childhood.

Autobiographical memory is the essential basis of a person, as it provides an understanding of one's connection with the world. It is this memory that records individual experiences and provides awareness of oneself as a personality. Recording autobiographical memory on paper can be presented in many ways. However, all authors start with childhood, as it lays the foundations of individual life. Applying the thesis that “the fate of a child is a pedagogical experiment, the effectiveness of which can best be assessed only by an adult test subject,”<sup>1</sup> we would like to turn to the descriptions of childhood by Jewish students of the modern period, whose autobiographies have been waiting for over a century to be a subject of research.

One feature of the current stage of the development of human sciences is interdisciplinarity, which within this chosen topic combines gender history, childhood history and Jewish history. As for the history of Jewish childhood, it has not been singled out as a direction of Jewish studies, in the framework of which the “national” interest prevails. There have been attempts to recreate the experience of Jewish childhood in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries on the basis of autobiographies collected in the 1930s by the Institute for Jewish Research, and to explore views on childhood in various social groups.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kosheleva 2000: 64.

<sup>2</sup> Oleshkevich 2020: 336, 342.

The public demand for works on gender history has led to in-depth studies based on the socio-cultural history of Jewish women. Eliyana Adler's works on the functioning of private schools for Jewish girls in the Russian Empire from 1831 to 1881 are important,<sup>3</sup> and her thesis about the significance of socio-cultural consequences of education for daughters, their families and Jewish communities is both salient and useful to the present study.<sup>4</sup> We would like to assume that among the students of private schools studied by Adler there may have been mothers of girls whose autobiographies are in the focus of our research.

Eugene Avrutin's works take a deeper look into the personal development of Jewish youth of the modern period, as he offers a rethinking of the foundations of the Jewish world in the Russian Empire. From our perspective, it is valuable to look at women's experiences, including the life story of Anna Vygodskaia, a representative of those Jewish youth emancipated in the Late Imperial Period.<sup>5</sup>

New research perspectives have provided deeper insights into the issue of gender history and the history of the Jews in the Russian Empire, focusing on the self-identification factors of female Jewish physicians.<sup>6</sup> The experience of acculturation of Jewish women in the Russian Empire, the source of which is women's biography studies, draws attention.<sup>7</sup> The goal of studying such documents is to explain intergenerational differences regarding worldviews, behavior and gender within the histories of individual Jewish families. The ethno-pedagogical principles of raising daughters in Jewish families of the Late Imperial Period are considered.<sup>8</sup>

The work on the history of childhood by scholars who claim that children received the right to childhood as a separate stage of development in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries helps in delving more deeply into the topic of the formation of a new female personality.<sup>9</sup> Viviana Zelizer's contribution on the emotional value of the child to the family, which changed the dominant family strategy of the child's economic usefulness, expanded the perspective of understanding childhood in the modern age.<sup>10</sup> The thesis that childhood is a phenomenon that undergoes changes and is largely caused by the appropriate cultural conditions, values, ideologies, and social opportunities for formation, i.e., that childhood is a product of a particular society,<sup>11</sup> encourages in-depth study of childhood history in the Russian Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Being a part of the Great Reforms, social modernization brought public attention to the situation of the most oppressed members of the society – women and children – leading to a crisis of the established patriarchal family and the relationship between the older and younger generations. The era was marked by the emancipation of women and the formation of a newly independent youth – groups of new parents who rethought

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<sup>3</sup> Adler 2004: 139–150.

<sup>4</sup> Adler 2011: 110.

<sup>5</sup> Avrutin, Greene 2012: XII.

<sup>6</sup> Rudneva 2011: 131–141.

<sup>7</sup> Sobolevskaya 2010: 372–376; Ermak 2016: 84–90.

<sup>8</sup> Ermak 2011: 227–230; Ermak 2018: 83–91.

<sup>9</sup> Kanningem 2012: 122.

<sup>10</sup> Zelizer 1985: 32.

<sup>11</sup> Forster 2012: 337.

the goals of raising children and their personal role in the educational process.<sup>12</sup> Jewish women comprised a significant proportion of the “new people” in the Russian Empire. Benjamin Natans’ productive idea of Russian Jews’ desire for civic emancipation creates an opportunity for its development based on the autobiographical narratives of early-20<sup>th</sup>-century female Jewish students.<sup>13</sup>

In the context of achievements of modern historiography, we are interested in a new understanding of to what degree the relationship between parents and children changed in Jewish families of the Late Imperial Period and of the emotional climate of the relationship. What family strategies for daughters prevailed? What was the childhood of Jewish girls like amidst the realities of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? It is important to deepen the understanding of the extent to which the general picture of the childhood of “child trainees”<sup>14</sup> is applicable to Jewish daughters.

The purpose of the study is to clarify the image of childhood in Jewish female students’ autobiographies dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The research methodology of the empirically-based work is built on the foundations of the conceptual achievements of Philippe Lejeune, who emphasizes that an autobiography is a reference text: identity is the true starting point of an autobiography.<sup>15</sup> In developing the autobiographical narrative of Jewish female students, we apply the results of a study by Janine Buckner and Robyn Fivush, who state that “autobiographical memories are not simply cognitive representations of what happened; they are fundamentally the ways in which we understand our experiences and ourselves, and [...] gender is a critical filter through which we understand the world and our place in it.”<sup>16</sup> Conducting the textual analysis of autobiographies, we shall take into account that current self-appraisal may play an active role in the organization and interpretation of past personal experience. The above methods should provide identification of girls’ subjectivity about their childhoods, the disclosure of essential features of individual children’s experience of Jewish women, and formation of the generalized image of childhood in autobiographical memories of early-20<sup>th</sup>-century female students.

## General characteristics of the source base

The sources of the study are the autobiographies of students of the medical department of the Kyiv Higher Courses for Women, which are stored in the State Archives of Kyiv in fonds 244, “Kyiv Higher Courses for Women”.<sup>17</sup> The documents are autobiographies of female students handwritten in Russian from December 1913 to January 1914. The general empirical basis of our study comprises documents of 27 Jewish girls, who, with

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<sup>12</sup> For more details see: Veremenko 2009: 621–632.

<sup>13</sup> Natans 2007: 8.

<sup>14</sup> Kosheleva 2000: 27.

<sup>15</sup> Lejeune 1975: 35, 38.

<sup>16</sup> Buckner, Fivush 1998: 425.

<sup>17</sup> DAK, f. 244, op. 15, d. 32, 90 l.

the exception of Sinyavskaya (only her surname is known), were first- or second-year students of the medical department of the Kyiv Higher Courses for Women.<sup>18</sup>

Grouping the studied girls' autobiographies according to the availability of information about childhood has revealed that 37.0% (10 students) described their childhood years in an expanded way, 33.3% presented it fragmentarily, and 29.6% did not mention it at all. The generalized personal characteristics of the ten Jewish girls whose description of childhood is quite meaningful forms the basis of the study.

*Personal data:* we have full information (surname, name and patronymic) on one person – Beylya Berkovna Lokshtanova; the full names and surnames of six people – Udel'-Rukhlya Baydyk, Sofiya Leytman, Khaya Pauzner, Sarra Stremovskaya, Roza Statnikova, and Khaya Khienikson; the first initials surnames of two persons – R. Dorf and R. Krimer; and only the surnames of two individuals – Sinyavskaya and Shekhtman.

*Age data:* 71.42% of the female students were minors (under 21).<sup>19</sup>

*Place of birth:* 66.66% of the girls were born in provinces within the boundaries of the Jewish Pale of Settlement in the Russian Empire, with the rest hailing from the provinces of Central Russia.<sup>20</sup>

*Marital status:* All the students were unmarried girls, most of whom relied on the financial support of family or philanthropists due to their young age and lack of income. At the time of writing, Shekhtman was an orphan.

*Social origin:* The majority (80%) of the girls did not indicate it in the document; R. Dorf clearly states, "father was a Zemstvo doctor, head of a fairly large hospital," while Sinyavskaya mentions that her "father kept a buffet on a steamer."<sup>21</sup> However, according to researchers most Jewish students came from the trade and business classes.<sup>22</sup>

The systematization of the existing autobiographical narratives about childhood was conducted according to the semantic criterion, which provided the grounds to single out the following thematic blocks: place of birth and residence, family, pastimes, mastering the basics of literacy, and admission to an educational institution. The empirical materials were summarized according to these blocks, and their characteristics and textual features were singled out. Such an analysis aims to deepen the understanding and explain the autobiographical memory of Jewish students regarding childhood. We also considered the fact that childhood experience is a narrative of variations related to generation, social status, gender, and age.<sup>23</sup>

## **“I consciously remember myself since the move”**

The girl students started their autobiographies with the date (although some do not provide it) and place of birth, which they associate with the notion of a “homeland.”

<sup>18</sup> For more details on the socio-demographic characteristics of Jewish girls, see: Drach 2022: 3–4.

<sup>19</sup> When calculating the age, the lack of information on the dates of birth of three people was taken into account.

<sup>20</sup> The calculation took into account the lack of information about the place of birth of one person.

<sup>21</sup> DAK, I. 39 [Avtobiografiya R. Dorf]; DAK, II. 27–28 ob. [Avtobiografiya Sinyavskaya].

<sup>22</sup> Ivanov 2009: 81.

<sup>23</sup> Kelly 2007: 570.

The girls often document family relocations. For example, Dukhina, born in Babruysk, Minsk Province, mentions that when she was two years old the family moved to Kyiv. “Thus, I have the vaguest memory of my homeland.”<sup>24</sup> Khaya Khienikson, born in Rozhyntsi, Volhynian Province, lived there until she was four, when her father was transferred to Polonne.<sup>25</sup> Shekhtman clearly states that she was born in a small town in Podolian Province, which she and her parents had to leave because of their “poor financial situation.” The family settled in a “provincial” Bessarabian town.<sup>26</sup> Fruma-Sarra Berman, from the town of Bila Tserkva, writes that her parents moved to Kyiv in 1908. Khaya Khienikson, born in the village of Spasskoye, Tambov Province (estate of N.P. Milyukov), notes that she attended primary school only for a short time, as her parents moved to Perm.<sup>27</sup> Khaya Pauzner had fragmentary memories of her childhood life on a farm. The girl consciously remembered her life from the time her parents moved to Voronezh and her entering the gymnasium.<sup>28</sup> All of these Jewish families changed their places of residence under the external influences of certain factors. The main destinations of their migration were larger communities or similar ones in other regions. The girls describe their impressions of the change of residence rather sparingly, as it most often happened in early childhood.

The girls’ autobiographies reveal Jewish families who lived quite dynamically, often changing their places of residence, and among them is the family of Sinyavskaya, who was born in an estate in Kursk Province (owned by N.A. Tereshchenko), where her father worked. When she was five years old, “the family moved to Kyiv because of the troubles that happened to father at work.”<sup>29</sup> The only thing the girl remembered about their early life in Kyiv was that they often changed apartments, until finally settling in Zlatoustivska Street. The family later left the city because of the death of a grandmother and moved to Mogilev. Her father had a buffet on a Mogilev-Loev steamer, so she and her mother lived in one city or another. Within a few years, the need to educate the daughter compelled her family to finally move to Kyiv and settle in Podil.<sup>30</sup> The Sinyavskaya family thus followed the father, who was the breadwinner. Their constant change of residence in Kyiv indirectly reveals the irregular income of the family. However, despite their difficult financial situation, the parents were well-aware of the expediency of the education of their eldest daughter, and took this into account when changing their place of residence.

The life of the family of the student R. Dorf, from the “picturesque Bessarabian village,” was also very mobile. When she was seven years old, she moved to Vienna with her parents. The girl quickly became accustomed to life in the big city, and soon spoke German fluently. She lived in Vienna for three years, coming home every summer.<sup>31</sup> At the age of 10, R. Dorf returned to Russia to live with relatives as her parents remained abroad. In a year and a half, the mother took the daughter to Davos,

<sup>24</sup> DAK, I. 21 [Avtobiografiya Dukhina].

<sup>25</sup> DAK, I. 73 [Avtobiografiya Udel’-Rukhlya Baydyk].

<sup>26</sup> DAK, I. 33 [Avtobiografiya Shekhtman].

<sup>27</sup> DAK, I. 62 [Avtobiografiya Khaya Khienikson].

<sup>28</sup> The girl did not indicate the place and region of birth clearly. DAK, I. 9 [Avtobiografiya Khaya Pauzner].

<sup>29</sup> DAK, I. 27. [Avtobiografiya Sinyavskaya].

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*: I. 27 ob.

<sup>31</sup> DAK, I. 39 [Avtobiografiya R. Dorf].

Switzerland. The student recalls the Davos period of her life with great pleasure. After a two-year stay in Switzerland, the Dorfs returned to the Russian Empire to settle again in Bessarabia, where the father held the position of zemstvo doctor, head of the hospital.<sup>32</sup> As we understand, the life of the Dorfs is just as dynamic: the wife and daughter followed their husband, who probably studied medicine at foreign universities, to Austria and Switzerland. It is important to mention that the daughter, of primary school age, lived abroad together with her parents, which was not typical for those times. Apparently, the arguments of the family members about the expediency of the daughter staying with them included the motives of multicultural training in Europe.

Regarding mobility, the situation of the family of Malka Zbarskaya from Bila Tserkva is exceptional here. After graduating from high school with a silver medal, the girl was late in submitting documents to the medical department of the Kyiv Higher Courses for Women. This happened because Malka had been giving private lessons all summer in Kyiv to earn enough to live there. As she notes in her autobiography, “I did not want to return to Bila Tserkva, but I could not stay in Kyiv.” In this situation, the parents decided to support their daughter, as “in a few months they settled all affairs in Bila Tserkva and moved to Kyiv.”<sup>33</sup> The next year, 1912, Malka became a student of the medical department.

The facts in the girls’ autobiographies stand as evidence of the significant mobility of Jewish families in the Late Imperial Period. They moved due to changes in the work or occupations of fathers, often in attempts to escape poverty. Another impetus behind change of residence was the education of children or a change in family circumstances. The life situations of the Sinyavskys and Dorfs exemplify how the dynamism of the Late Imperial Period was inherent to the lives of various socio-professional groups of Jews. The overall mobility strategy of Russian Jews undoubtedly had the goal of improving the well-being of one’s own family, one important aspect of which was providing for the future of their children. We believe that the interests of the further development of children, including daughters, were taken into account when a family made decisions to relocate. The decision of the older generation of the Zbarskys, who agreed to move so their daughter could obtain a higher education, demonstrates significant transformations in the relationship between parents and children of the modern era in the direction of democratization, humanization and emancipation.

### **“The place where I was born and spent my childhood was very picturesque”**

According to researchers of socialization theories (S. Freud, G.H. Mead, T. Parsons), childhood is crucial for the formation of the individual’s personality. We would like to consider the narratives of girls’ childhoods in the available autobiographies of Jewish female students. We are interested in the general conditions of childhood of Jewish girls

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*: l. 39 ob.

<sup>33</sup> DAK, l. 43 [Avtobiografiya Malka Gershevna Zbarskaya].

in the Late Imperial Period, their assessments of their childhoods in autobiographies, and particulars of the educational role of the family.

A love for one's homeland, for the place of birth and growing up, runs through most of the girls' autobiographies. The daughter of the doctor R. Dorf begins her story as follows: "My homeland is Bessarabia. The location of the village where I was born and spent my childhood was very picturesque [...]. In the middle of Bessarabian nature, not steppes, but forests and mountains..."<sup>34</sup> I.-E. Shklovskaya outlines how she "was born in Tsarychanka, Poltava Province, an extremely picturesque, forest-rich area."<sup>35</sup>

U.-R. Baydyk spent her childhood years with her family in Polonne. Her life was quite calm and she fully "enjoyed the beauty of rural life."<sup>36</sup> Mariya Braver, who spent her childhood in Belopolsk, Berdychiv district, Kyiv Province, notes the extraordinary beauty of this area.<sup>37</sup>

The words of Braver reveal her admiration for her small homeland and its picturesque landscapes, and this is also specific to urban women. Sofiya Brushteyn, born in Perm, wrote about her hometown with warmth and pride in her autobiography. "Our city is small, but clean and beautiful. It stands on the banks of the Kama River. I grew up and studied here."<sup>38</sup>

The above factual material reveals the desire of the authors to indicate not only their place of birth but also the advantages of their cozy provincial settlements. In the individual memory of the female students, the surrounding nature of the homeland was usually associated with positive emotions which remained warm and joyful over the years.

The pedagogical leaders of that time recommended useful and cognitive leisure in nature, the goal of which was the physical and moral development of children, practical acquaintance with the environment, and the formation of their curiosity.<sup>39</sup> We would like to take a closer look at the autobiographical accounts and stories of outdoor childhood activities to understand their role and significance to our heroines.

Among the childhood memories of life on the farm, five-year-old Khaya Puzner remembers a forest being felled. She recollects the feeling that overwhelmed her when she witnessed a huge tree falling to the ground, shaking from the roots to the top. One beautiful summer evening clearly remained in her mind. It was the day when a huge bouquet of flowers was brought to her, so big she could not hold it in her hands.<sup>40</sup>

Sofiya Leitman, born in a small town in Kyiv Province, also states that her near-rural way of life provided closeness to nature, and she recalls spending time playing boisterous games in her family's garden and the fascination of hiking in a nearby forest. As she provides the fullest account of active children's leisure in the open air, we share the original lines from her autobiography here:

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<sup>34</sup> DAK, I. 39 [Avtobiografiya R. Dorf].

<sup>35</sup> DAK, I. 5 [Avtobiografiya Ita-Ester Moiseevna Shklovskaya].

<sup>36</sup> DAK, I. 73 [Avtobiografiya Udel'-Rukhlya Baydyk].

<sup>37</sup> DAK, I. 74 [Avtobiografiya Mariya Braver].

<sup>38</sup> DAK, I. 37 [Avtobiografiya Sofiya Brushteyn].

<sup>39</sup> Lesgil'e 1870: 316-317.

<sup>40</sup> DAK, I. 9 [Avtobiografiya Khaya Puzner].

As children, we spent whole days playing noisy games in the garden, enjoying the first spring grass and the first snow. Living in the countryside, we were close to nature and we loved it. However, our delights in the enjoyment of nature was unintentionally accompanied by “victims,” like breaking branches when picking flowers and berries, and butterflies deprived of their beautiful lives, but we did not destroy nests; this cruelty was not inherent in us. I also have vivid memories of walks in the nearby forest (our garden was small). Preparations excited us in a way beyond description. Even though we could not imagine any other environment than trees, flowers, snowdrifts, birds’ choirs, butterflies, moths, and so on, we were infinitely pleased with the opportunity to pick plenty of flowers and berries, to run far, far away, and to wander freely through the forest for long periods of time.<sup>41</sup>

Sofiya Leitman states that children spent their childhood mostly in the open air in their own gardens, playing active games with other children. In her words she comprehends the incidents of their children’s cognition of natural phenomena, the exploration of flora and fauna. Our understanding of the girl’s sense of the significance and vitality of nature deepens the emotionality and sincerity of the narrative of forest walks in childhood. At the same time, the children’s immersion in the atmosphere of freedom in nature was limited by their familiarity with the rules of conduct, as evidenced by certain phrases (“unintentional victims,” “far, far away,” “wander freely,” “opportunity to pick”). Sofiya specifically emphasized their awareness of the common educational canon: fellowship with the animal world, including the prohibition against destroying bird’s nests.<sup>42</sup>

Undoubtedly, the romantic motif of the healing power of nature in the native land, as sketched in these autobiographies of Jewish girls, was deepened by the reading of children’s literature in which natural forces were represented as a universal helper, with the ability to save one from misfortune and to heal physical and emotional wounds.<sup>43</sup> Descriptions of nature lay bare the authors’ inner emotional worlds.<sup>44</sup> This method of self-expression through the landscape is rooted in the literary tradition of sentimentalism and romanticism. These Jewish female students, who represented a cohort of the best graduates of women’s gymnasiums in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, were undoubtedly adept at expressing their own thoughts in writing.

### “Childhood was carefree”

One important aspect of the girls’ narrations of childhood is seen in their descriptions of the family atmosphere during their growth.

Infancy, the first age of childhood, ending between the ages of five and seven, is generally remembered as the happiest, most carefree period of life. It was believed that at this age children were pre-rational and sinless beings, so they were pampered and allowed to do everything they wished. At that time, only women – mothers, grandmothers, sisters, nannies and governesses – were engaged in the raising of children. Receiving their love and affection, being fed delicacies, the indulgence in everything pleasant, are

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<sup>41</sup> DAK, I. 45 [Avtobiografiya Sofiya Leitman].

<sup>42</sup> Shushtar 2012: 296.

<sup>43</sup> Bukhina 2011: 392.

<sup>44</sup> Savkina 2007: 231.

remembered as sweet snippets of life.<sup>45</sup> Does the image of childhood and family care presented in the autobiographies of Jewish female students resemble this?

Sofiya Leitman broadly describes in her autobiography her carefree and cheerful childhood, with her sisters and brother surrounded by caring relatives, especially their mother<sup>46</sup>. Beylya Lokshanova, born in Gomel, Mogilev Province, also recalls a carefree and cheerful childhood: “We have several children in our family. We were constantly naughty together, played a variety of games; I took the most active part in all the tricks.”<sup>47</sup> Roza Statnikova’s childhood years passed happily among her relatives. Her status as the family’s favourite was determined by her birth: she was the eldest daughter and eldest granddaughter. The girl was “wrapped in the most tender worries, forestalled the slightest desires.”<sup>48</sup> R. Dorf spent her carefree childhood in the heart of Bessarabian nature among loving relatives who adored her.<sup>49</sup> Masha Wittenberg from Dvinsk, Vitebsk Province, the daughter of the St. Petersburg merchant of the First Guild Menachem Movshevich Wittenberg, had an equally comfortable childhood. She laconically states in her autobiography how she “did not suffer any hardships in childhood,” which she spent with her six older sisters. The upbringing of the Jewish girl before she entered higher education was supervised by a foreign governess who lived with the family.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the Jewish daughters were growing up in family circles which included parents, sisters, brothers, and the older relatives of grandparents.

A common trend in the modern period was the evolution of the extended family into the modern nuclear family, which was increasingly separating itself from society as an independent parent-child group. From that moment on, all the energy was directed towards the advancement of offspring, each one individually. Children became more important than family interests.<sup>51</sup> The gradual erosion of the patriarchal family and the norms of the traditional worldview led to qualitative changes in the nature of family relations and the family’s relationship with society. The new atmosphere in the families of the period under study is expressed perfectly by the hero of Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*: “In our days, parents can no longer live, everything is for the children.”<sup>52</sup> The transformations spread slowly but steadily throughout society, as evidenced by the autobiographies of the Jewish daughters.

Parents’ love is what matters most for a child’s life. In the autobiographies considered here, the female students reveal this both directly and indirectly. Some of our heroines emphasize their “privileged” position as a favorite of the family. Researchers explain this emotional significance as being partially the result of improving living standards, but the role of new cultural norms should not be underestimated.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Kosheleva 2000: 39.

<sup>46</sup> DAK, l. 45 [Avtobiografiya Sofiya Leitman].

<sup>47</sup> DAK, l. 48 [Avtobiografiya Beylya Berkovna Lokshanova].

<sup>48</sup> DAK, l. 56 [Avtobiografiya Roza Statnikova].

<sup>49</sup> DAK, l. 39 [Avtobiografiya R. Dorf].

<sup>50</sup> DAK, l. 77 [Avtobiografiya Masha Wittenberg].

<sup>51</sup> Ar’es 1999: 404.

<sup>52</sup> Tolstoy 1989: 573.

<sup>53</sup> Kannigem 2012: 122.

In her autobiography Sarra Stremovskaya, a native of the village of Pokrovskoye, Yekaterinoslav Province, noted the important leading role of her parents in the educational process:

I was raised by my parents. They steadily followed every step of my childhood life, which had a beneficial effect on my later life. My slightest attempt to elude their watchful eye was noticed every time. But having pointed out the seeds of good qualities in me, they made every effort to develop these good sides of my nature.<sup>54</sup>

As follows from her autobiography, as a student with the opportunity to communicate with her peers, Sarra highly appreciated her parent's educational efforts to develop her individual abilities and personal qualities.

Scholars of the history of the family and childhood in the Late Imperial Period rightly point to the spread of a type of "new parents" who wanted to build their lives in accordance with their own values. The characteristic feature of this was the parents' active personal participation in the upbringing and education of children, in the form of constant control over the learning process.<sup>55</sup> Using the example of Sarra's parents, it should be stated that Jewish families in rural areas followed this model of "new parents," with expanded personal participation and roles in raising their children, most importantly to us, their daughters.

At the same time, there is a category of female students who assess their own childhoods less favorably. As an adult, Khaya Khienikson wrote in her autobiography that, "people who knew me as a little girl told me that I was a healthy, sensitive girl, rather serious beyond my years. There was little childhood in me, and I did not even have toys, the necessary companions of the childhood of every child."<sup>56</sup>

R. Krimer, a native of the city of Kirsanov, Tambov Province, where she spent her entire childhood, writes:

I have only vague memories of my early childhood. For some reason, one case when I was three years old stays in my memory: my brother had a children's drum, I really liked to play with it, and I remember that I once quarreled with him over this drum.<sup>57</sup>

Several other girls repeat this theme of fragile childhood memories in their autobiographies. Malka Zbarskaya states: "I have only vague memories of my early childhood."<sup>58</sup> In addition to the stories recounted in her autobiography, Khaya Puzner recalls only one or two other incidents clearly, while the rest seems to be shrouded in a dense fog, from which glimmers of memories shine through in places.<sup>59</sup> Even the verbose Sinyavskaya prefers to skip the details of her younger childhood, considering them limited and uninteresting: "I have a few memories of that time that are not very interesting. I vaguely remember the first years of life in Kyiv."<sup>60</sup> We assume that traumatic childhood experiences led some authors to subconsciously avoid it, which resulted in the uncertainty of

<sup>54</sup> DAK, I. 58 [Avtobiografiya Sarra Stremovskaya].

<sup>55</sup> Veremenko 2015: 111–112.

<sup>56</sup> DAK, I. 62 [Avtobiografiya Khaya Khienikson].

<sup>57</sup> DAK, I. 44 [Avtobiografiya R. Krimer].

<sup>58</sup> DAK, I. 43 [Avtobiografiya Malka Gersheva Zbarskaya].

<sup>59</sup> DAK, I. 9 [Avtobiografiya Khaya Puzner].

<sup>60</sup> DAK, I. 27 [Avtobiografiya Sinyavskaya].

childhood memories. Undoubtedly, the female students who did not provide information about their childhoods had different upbringings.

According to researchers, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries adults often perceived children as flawed beings and childhood a flawed phenomenon, one which had to be gradually replaced through proper upbringing, education, and physical development.<sup>61</sup> Education was largely aimed at overcoming the child’s animal beginnings and outbreaks of aggression, greed, fear of society, laziness, and indiscriminate whims.<sup>62</sup> Emotional education assumed the ability to control oneself. A well-brought-up child knew what was good and what was bad and was clearly aware of her or his place in the family hierarchy. Parental rights were not questioned. Jewish children knew well the world in which they would live. This was facilitated by the practicality of Jewish education. From early childhood, the child was aimed at mastering their future profession: toys symbolized shops, goods, and coins; even daughters were allowed to play with money.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, the provincial towns and cities in which the Jewish families lived, as evidenced in girls’ stories, did not differ much from the villages. The scenario of the early childhood of Jewish women was the same: upbringing in a family, mother’s care, relatives’ care, relationships with sisters and brothers, play and entertainment, and spending time in nature. None of the girls mention child abuse or corporal punishment in their autobiographies. Researchers consider this a notable feature of the traditional upbringing of Jews, where the educator preferred verbal suggestion or depriving the troublemaker of certain pleasures.<sup>64</sup> A gentleness is also evident in maternal upbringing, as the young offspring fell within the realm of women’s responsibility. The growth of Jewish daughters was aimed at physical health, emotional development, building relationships with family members and the local community, as well as learning about the world around them and the rules of behavior within it.

### **“I started studying quite early”**

Actually, only early childhood was considered an age of games and fun. From the age of approximately nine years, the child had to forget about play and attend to productive activities like studying or helping parents.<sup>65</sup> With the end of infancy, the child entered a new stage, one in which the tasks of spiritual development of the individual were added to the issues of physical care.

The transition from carefree infancy to the stage of basic training – completing a literacy programme – took place individually in each Jewish family. Accordingly, the girls’ autobiographies contain indications of the early beginning of studying the alphabet and reading.

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<sup>61</sup> Martianova 2011: 66.

<sup>62</sup> Ponomareva, Khoroshilova 2009: 90.

<sup>63</sup> Sobolevskaya, Goncharov 2005: 307.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*: 304.

<sup>65</sup> Kosheleva 2000: 39.

Fruma-Sarra Berman notes in her autobiography that “I received my primary education at home. My first teacher was my mother: she taught me to read at the age of five or six, I don’t remember exactly.”<sup>66</sup> Khasya Roninson, a native of Vitebsk, “from a modest merchant family,” notes briefly in her autobiography how “my first more or less clear memory is from the age of six, when I was first taught to read and write.”<sup>67</sup> We suppose that her new role and duties, along with the accompanying reactions of her parents, were such an emotionally significant event for Khasya, the youngest daughter in a Jewish family, that they became the basis of individual childhood memory.

As noted by U.-R. Baydyk, her carefree years ended quickly: the girl started her studies when she was six years old. She willingly started reading books and was infinitely happy with her own achievements in reading and writing.<sup>68</sup> In the sixth year of her life, under the guidance of a tutor, Khaya Khienikson began to study. The girl’s desire to learn to read was so strong that she skilfully composed words and quickly began to read children’s tales, which she loved immensely.<sup>69</sup>

Mariya Braver briefly notes that “life was carefree, but not for a long time – at the age of seven I began studying.”<sup>70</sup> From the age of seven, R. Krimer also learned the basics of reading, first under the guidance of her mother, and then under the guidance of a teacher who prepared the girl for gymnasium.<sup>71</sup> Nekhama Savranskaya, from the village of Limansk, Kherson Province, notes that she spent her childhood in a family house where she was not burdened with classes until the age of eight. The Jewish girl began her studies with a home tutor.<sup>72</sup> Ita-Ester Shklovskaya notes in her autobiography that when she was seven or eight years old, her older sister taught her to read.<sup>73</sup> Sofiya Brushteyn from Perm writes that “I started to learn to read and write at the age of six or seven.”<sup>74</sup>

The autobiographies tell of how the daughters were taught the basics of literacy at home, and an active role in this process was played mainly by women – mothers, sisters, and private female teachers. The girls’ accounts of home schooling provides evidence for its various forms and qualities in Jewish families; the differences in parents’ understanding of the necessary minimum of educational training for their daughters, in which only reading was a mandatory component, and the differing age parameters for girls to start learning to read and write. The semantic analysis of the female students’ presentations confirms the slowness of some parents’ decision-making to start their daughters’ schooling.

According to the researchers, the daily mood, the atmosphere of the home, and the optimal conditions for life and study were the responsibility of the mother to create, but it was the father or grandfather who began to teach children the Torah. In a broader sense, this commandment is explained as the parents’ duty to transmit respect for the

<sup>66</sup> DAK, I. 35 [Avtobiografiya Fruma-Sarra Berman].

<sup>67</sup> DAK, I. 25 [Avtobiografiya Khasya Roninson].

<sup>68</sup> DAK, I. 73 [Avtobiografiya Udel’-Rukhlya Baydyk].

<sup>69</sup> DAK, I. 62 [Avtobiografiya Khaya Khienikson].

<sup>70</sup> DAK, I. 74 [Avtobiografiya Mariya Braver].

<sup>71</sup> DAK, I. 70 [Avtobiografiya R. Krimer].

<sup>72</sup> DAK, I. 86 [Avtobiografiya Nekhama Savranskaya].

<sup>73</sup> DAK, I. 5 [Avtobiografiya Ita-Ester Moiseevna Shklovskaya].

<sup>74</sup> DAK, I. 37 [Avtobiografiya Sofiya Brushteyn].

traditional way of life and the habit of performing religious duties to their children. Boys and girls needed to learn everything gradually and naturally, so they were told about the commandments in early childhood, and the conduct of the parents provided a personal example.<sup>75</sup> The female students did not directly mention this in their autobiographies, but the analysis of the text and context of the words of individual authors gives grounds for agreeing with such a research position.

Thus, Malka Zbarskaya from Bila Tserkva indicates briefly: “I received my primary education at home under the guidance of my parents.”<sup>76</sup> It should be noted that the daughter emphasized the educational role of the parents, not only the mother. We assume that the father also made efforts to educate his daughter. Our statement is confirmed by the fact that the parents moved to Kyiv to support their daughter in her pursuit of higher medical education.

In the processing of autobiographies, the significant role of the older generation in the process of inculcating national cultural patterns becomes evident. The dominant educational ideal of the parents of the modern period is formulated in the autobiography of Sarra Stremovskaya:

At the age of six I first had a desire to understand the world around me, but I was told that this requires a lot of learning. As a vulnerable child, I remembered this, and this thought became the leading one in my educational life.<sup>77</sup>

Further fragments of her childhood confirm the value of the daughter’s intellectual development formed in the Jewish family:

After learning to read, I became interested in reading. Noticing my early motivation to read, my parents encouraged me to do so, my father by buying me a bunch of children’s books, and my mother by shielding me from the noise of the family.<sup>78</sup>

Having mastered reading early, R. Dorf was fond of books. Children’s literature was carefully selected, as the daughter’s reading was supervised by the mother. Thus, in the circle of a loving family, among games and reading, the girl had gradually learned the basics by the time she was seven.<sup>79</sup> R. Dorf’s words highlight the leading role of the mother in the development of cognitive abilities and the emotional intelligence of the daughter. In general, the autobiographical narratives of the daughters confirm the position of researchers on the relentless spread of learnedness and the reading of literature among Jewish women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>80</sup>

Sofiya Leitman noted in her autobiography how she started reading early, and she was the most fascinated by adventures and tales about good fairies. Active reading influenced the development of the imagination and fantasy of the Jewish girl, who, according to her own recounting, could tell her own fairy tales for hours, and the

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<sup>75</sup> Sobolevskaya, Goncharov 2005: 307.

<sup>76</sup> DAK, l. 43 [Avtobiografiya Malka Gershevna Zbarskaya].

<sup>77</sup> DAK, l. 58 [Avtobiografiya Sarra Stremovskaya].

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> DAK, l. 39 [Avtobiografiya R. Dorf].

<sup>80</sup> Adler 2011: 114; Parush 2004: XIII.

exceptional attention of her listeners only encouraged and inspired the little storyteller.<sup>81</sup> Here are lines from Sofiya's autobiography:

I learned to read early and, most of all, I was fascinated by fairy tales about good fairies and adventures. I often read them to other children, for which I earned their great love. So, under the influence of reading, my imagination and fantasy developed very much, so that I could tell my own fairy tales for hours. They expressed a lot of the personal, along with the borrowed, which is proven by the attention of my listeners. Their focused attention encouraged and inspired me.<sup>82</sup>

The childhood interest in reading inherent in most of the female students, encouraged by their parents, is emphasized in their autobiographies. The images common in the literature of that time of extraordinary girls who independently mastered the unknown world and dared to challenge it, to defend their own opinions and even argue with adults, undoubtedly influenced the formation of an active life position of the generation of girls of the modern era.<sup>83</sup>

The analysis of autobiographies proves that literacy was a factor that affected the range of daily interests of Jewish girls. "When I learned to read and write, reading books became my favorite pastime. The games began to take second place," Beylya Lokshtanova summarized.<sup>84</sup> For many girls, reading books had since become a favourite pastime, and "literacy," or a thorough knowledge of many things, had become a quality that favourably distinguished inquisitive girls from their peers.

It should be mentioned that childhood, as an important component of human life, is represented in the autobiographies by incidents from the memories of individual girls, which can be summarized by the term "imaginary ideal pictures." In some measure, the explanation for this may be the personality of the authors, the most purposeful and ambitious Jewish girls, honours' students brought up in a family atmosphere of love and mutual support. Herewith, the difficult childhood of the modern period, in particular the urban childhood, is a widespread topos of the world literature of that time, including in the Ukrainian and Russian literary arts. We assume that, when writing their autobiographies, the first- and second-year female learners formed the narrative through the prism of achieving their dream – enrolment in medical school, so the stage of home childhood, where there were fewest difficulties and regulations and plenty of care and affection from relatives, acquired an idealized colour in their memories and thoughts.

### **"I was sent to school"**

Scholars claim that in aristocratic families, a child roughly between the ages of three and ten was considered a preschooler. The main task of preschool education in the Late Imperial Period was to prepare children for school, while in the previous period, most of

<sup>81</sup> DAK, l. 45 [Avtobiografiya Sofiya Leitman].

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Drach 2019: 143.

<sup>84</sup> DAK, l. 48 [Avtobiografiya Beylya Berkovna Lokshtanova].

the children of the nobility had only the opportunity to be educated at home.<sup>85</sup> According to V. Khiterer, Jews felt an obligation to educate their children, or at least the boys. They did their best to get their offspring into the imperial institutions of secondary and higher education.<sup>86</sup> It is necessary to find out whether Jewish families had similar educational goals and practices for their daughters.

The study of autobiographies gives reasons to state that the type of educational institution and the age when Jewish girls started studying were determined individually by Jewish families. Undoubtedly, residents of large cities were in a better position in terms of options for daughters' education, as the range of educational institutions at different levels was wider. The expectations of Jewish parents were related both to the acquisition of the appropriate amount of knowledge and basic educational competencies (the “required minimum” of education) and to the socialization of girls in order to get used to the cultural environment outside the Jewish world.

Mina Rabinovich from Łódź notes briefly: “I started studying at the age of eight, entered the [primary] school, [where I] was preparing for a gymnasium.”<sup>87</sup> Kyivan Sinyavskaya's autobiographical narrative details her parents' considerations when choosing a school for their daughter, in particular gender prejudices regarding boys and girls studying together in primary school<sup>88</sup>:

When I was about eight years old, I was sent to a progymnasium, because there was no good city school nearby: in all the schools that were not far from us, girls studied together with boys and my mother did not want to send me there, even though it wasn't easy for the family to pay for progymnasium.<sup>89</sup>

It is noteworthy that the mother, who was responsible for the family and therefore for the daughter when the father left to earn money, was opposed to co-education. The gender stereotypes of the mother outweighed even the financial concerns, as Sinyavskaya stated sincerely. We think that Sinyavskaya's mother forming such a categorical position regarding her daughter's education with boys was influenced by the grandmother who lived with them. The rule that the main value of a girl lay in her chastity, high morals and impeccable behavior remained dominant in the minds of the older generation of the family.

In fact, Jewish girls perceived the beginning of formal school instruction at the age of eight or nine years as the norm. Sofiya Brushteyn stated that “these first classes of mine were paid little attention. At the age of eight, I was seriously prepared for the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of the gymnasium.”<sup>90</sup> For example, in her autobiography Ita-Ester Shklovskaya remarks on how her seniors were slow to begin her education: “Only at the age of nine did I begin to

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<sup>85</sup> Veremenko 2015: 105.

<sup>86</sup> Khiterer 2018: 158, 178.

<sup>87</sup> DAK, I. 6 [Avtobiografiya Mina Rabinovich].

<sup>88</sup> According to the law, “primary public schools” in which boys and girls could receive primary education in villages and cities. There were one-grade public schools with a three-year course (Divine law, reading, writing, counting) and two-grade public schools, where the first grade was similar to a single-grade institution, and the second grade (two-year course) included additional subjects of primary education.

<sup>89</sup> DAK, I. 27 [Avtobiografiya Sinyavskaya].

<sup>90</sup> DAK, I. 37 [Avtobiografiya Sofiya Brushteyn].

study seriously to prepare for admission to the gymnasium.”<sup>91</sup> Family favourite R. Statnikova honestly remarked that she “started studying late, entering the gymnasium only at the age of ten or eleven.”<sup>92</sup> As we understand, home education and the initial educational basics taught to the female student were clearly separated from the training for admission to a particular educational institution, as emphasized by Statnikova’s phrase “study seriously.” In fact, the daughters were well-aware of the purpose and objectives of their training, as their usual infant carefree life transitioned into the clearly regulated daily routine of the child student.

Some of the diarists emphasize that they personally initiated their education, explaining it to their parents. R. Dorf, who went to Vienna with her parents at the age of seven, described her childhood educational persistence as follows:

I was a sharp child, very soon I got used to the noise of the big city and began to talk fluently in German. Thanks to my intensified requests, I was sent to school. I became so familiar with the language that studying at school as a foreigner was certainly not difficult for me. I lived in Vienna for three years, returning to the homeland for the summer. A lot about Vienna has remained in my memory.<sup>93</sup>

Khasya Roninson revealed the motivation behind girls making such requests: “All the brothers and sisters were older than me, it was boring at home. I relentlessly asked my parents to send me to the school.”<sup>94</sup> Thus, the Jewish girl sought not only to expand her educational training, but also to communicate with peers, study daily and have new experiences with friends. In fact, the monotony of home life no longer satisfied the daughters of the modern age. They yearned to go outside, beyond the usual family circle and parental control.

We would like to trace how these Jewish girls described the demarcation between younger and older childhood in their autobiographies. R. Krimer clearly separated early childhood with its vague memories from her childhood covered by learning, well-remembered in memory:

I clearly remember myself only from the age of nine. I was then taken to Tambov to enter the gymnasium. Tambov seemed a very large and beautiful city to me. I did not pass the exam for the gymnasium and was taken back to Kirsanov. It was my first childhood grief. I remember now how terrible my situation seemed to me: all the way back I cried bitterly; neither persuasion and consolation nor sweets could comfort me. The moment when I would have to tell my beloved teacher about this seemed most terrible to me.<sup>95</sup>

The daughter’s psychological trauma over the failed exam was exacerbated by the unjustified expectations of relatives and fears of disappointing her teacher with an unpleasant result, which certainly complemented R. Krimer’s doubts in their abilities. However, her parents, who had already decided on their daughter’s secondary education, took steps to find other available educational institutions. R. Krimer finally justified her parents’ expectations:

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<sup>91</sup> DAK, I. 5 [Avtobiografiya Ita-Ester Moiseevna Shklovskaya].

<sup>92</sup> DAK, I. 56 [Avtobiografiya Roza Statnikova].

<sup>93</sup> DAK, I. 39 [Avtobiografiya R. Dorf].

<sup>94</sup> DAK, I. 25 [Avtobiografiya Khasya Roninson].

<sup>95</sup> DAK, I. 44 [Avtobiografiya R. Krimer].

In August of the same year, I successfully passed the exams and entered the 1st grade of Borisoglebsk Gymnasium. It was the greatest joy. It seemed to me that I had already *become quite an adult* because of it and that *I had great responsibilities*.<sup>96</sup>

As we can see, R. Krimer’s autobiography recorded her dominant emotions, where the main motif was her own upbringing and corresponding responsibilities. In fact, the period of childhood summed up the girl’s self-awareness of regulations and institutions of social discipline. In her autobiography, Beylya Lokshanova writes openly that admission to an educational institution fundamentally affected her psychological properties, changing her lifestyle and the fullness of everyday life:

In my tenth year, I entered the preparatory class of the gymnasium and soon took my place as one of the best students. Since that time, my character changed significantly: I immediately turned into a quiet, thoughtful girl from a playful child.<sup>97</sup>

The analysis of girls’ autobiographies shows that the daughters’ home childhood ended with an entrance exam to the educational institution chosen by the parents, and further education, often in a foreign city. The Jewish daughter’s departure from the family circle and the established environment, associated with education, going “outside,” encouraged parents to take appropriate preparatory measures. The girls’ narratives confirm how entering an educational institution meant gaining the status of a female student of the school/gymnasium with a clear awareness of new behavioral rules and responsibilities, which symbolized growing up. It is noteworthy that leaving home to study was no longer a tragedy for parents or daughters at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as it was perceived in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, the symbolism of leaving home as a turning point in the lives of Jewish daughters, which separated a carefree home childhood from the position of a student of a certain educational institution with a regulated educational process and behavior, remained. This is confirmed by words from the autobiography of the student Avist-Vant, who connected the end of her childhood with leaving home to study, although she was already seventeen years old at that time:

I was born in the city of Kuznitsa, Grodno Province, on January 25, 1890. I spent my childhood at home, where I studied quite successfully. In order to get a secondary education, I had to go to Vilna. In 1907, I entered the 6<sup>th</sup> grade of the private female gymnasium of Antokolskiy and Gurevich, which I graduated from.<sup>98</sup>

More details about Jewish girls’ expectations of new school life can be found in the autobiography of U.-R. Baydyk, who, like the other authors, started her education at home:

I studied very diligently and, in three years I was highly prepared for entering the local rural training school. Having brilliantly passed the exam, I immediately entered the third group [grade]. It was here that the most interesting part of my life began, which I now recall with a warm feeling.

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* [italics added].

<sup>97</sup> DAK, I. 48 [Avtobiografiya Beylya Berkovna Lokshanova].

<sup>98</sup> DAK, I. 72 [Avtobiografiya Avist-Vant].

How much pleasure and joy it was to get up early and, having hastily prepared, set off to the school, which was three versts away from our house, along the snowy path! With what interest I treated the new knowledge received every day, eagerly listened to the words of the teacher. I studied well all the time and graduated with honors in three years.<sup>99</sup>

Similar views on the high expectations of school life and the new role of the student were noted in the autobiography of Sarra Stremovskaya, who was certainly not upset at leaving home:

In the eleventh year, it was decided to send me to the gymnasium. Since we lived in the provinces, I had to be taken to a city that was foreign to me. But I thought about it with joy, because I knew that a new life would open up to me there. I entered the first grade of the Novomoskovsk Women's Gymnasium. Excellent home preparation made me one of the best students of the class.<sup>100</sup>

Biographical notes of the students of Jewish institutions often were extremely concise. For example, Dukhina from a tailor's family at the age of eight was sent to the Jewish school in Kyiv, where she studied for two years.<sup>101</sup> The girl received the basic knowledge of Hebrew and Russian language and arithmetic. Khaya Karovych from Odesa (born in 1893) started studying at the first category Kowlman-Kleiman school in 1902, where she studied for five years.<sup>102</sup>

Thus, the primary school was usually chosen in the same location with the place of residence of the Jewish family. The girls testified to the comfortable educational environment of primary schools. If it was culturally or financially possible to get primary education at home, the parents took this opportunity, and in this way the daughters had an extended childhood time. The practice of home study included the educational component of primary education. The purpose of this individual study was to prepare a Jewish girl for further socialization in a secondary school, to being among strangers in a non-ethnic educational environment. In the autobiographies, there are no mentions of discussions or doubts in the families about the expediency of fathers or relatives teaching the daughters. Not only were family members (mostly mothers) or guest teachers involved in preparing their daughter for school (primary or secondary) during the study period. Jewish families used specialized public institutions – preparatory classes at educational institutions, which, despite the high cost, were in demand in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>103</sup>

Our view is that caring for the education of daughters was becoming an integral part of the overall parenting strategy in Jewish families, and this correlates with the thesis of researchers of the childhood of noble families of the Late Imperial Period on modelling the educational training of children under the influence of real life circumstances of a particular household, rather than consciously embodied gender differences.<sup>104</sup> If the new generations of noble parents of the Russian Empire were pragmatic about the necessary educational training of their children, realizing that the marriage of daughters could

<sup>99</sup> DAK, I. 73 [Avtobiografiya Udel'-Rukhlya Baydyk].

<sup>100</sup> DAK, I. 58 [Avtobiografiya Sarra Stremovskaya].

<sup>101</sup> DAK, I. 21 [Avtobiografiya Dukhina].

<sup>102</sup> DAK, I. 87 [Avtobiografiya Khaya Karovych].

<sup>103</sup> Veremenko 2015: 119.

<sup>104</sup> For more details, see: Veremenko 2009: 626; Veremenko 2015: 117, 129.

be a very distant prospect, then the emancipation of Jewish families undoubtedly included following the successful experience of obtaining a solid education for girls and professional qualifications with the possibility of self-employment, and so parents encouraged their daughters to pay particular attention to their professional training. V. Khiterer’s thesis on the desire of wealthy Jews in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to give their children a decent general education can be reasonably extrapolated to daughters.<sup>105</sup>

## Conclusions

In summarizing how female Jewish students of the medical department of the Kyiv Higher Courses for Women understood childhood, as expressed in their autobiographies, we assert that the personal past is a socially constructed object, and that autobiographical consciousness, as a process, is the product of this reflection.<sup>106</sup>

The strategy of the residence of Jews in the Russian Empire, with its legal restrictions against Jews and latent anti-Semitism that spilled over in times of crisis, was based on the age-old vitality and adaptability of the ancient Jewish people, implemented through the proper preparation of new generations. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries, deepening modernization of socio-economic and cultural development of the state led to the dynamism of life of some Russian Jews, who sought social opportunities to earn a living. Seeking opportunities to improve the well-being of their own families, persistent Jewish parents moved to towns and cities in the provinces. The commercial and entrepreneurial appeal of urban life in the perspective of parents combined and expanded opportunities for education and professionalization of their children, including daughters. The reflection of the mobility of Jewish families in the autobiographical memory of the daughters testifies to the social significance of transience for the future lives of the girls.

A feature of girls’ narratives of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is the description of not only a coherent outline of important events of their own social life, including childhood, as practiced by authors since the Enlightenment. These autobiographies demonstrate the significant development of one’s own “self,” as reflected in the narrative of the evolution of their inner world from an early age. The sincerity of the presentation, the emotional coloring, and instructive connotations of their childhood build the meaningful potential of the formation of personality and maturation of Jewish girls, presented as a balance between the individual and her environment. The psychological portraits of the authors as children are outlined fragmentarily, capturing the circumstances and space of their childhood environment. They differ in the details, but in general, we can see an active girl surrounded by relatives, whose educational guidelines together with the natural environment formed a developmental environment, one that aroused natural curiosity, interest in reading, and a desire to explore the world.

The change in the context of modern childhood and the concept of child welfare, presented by scholars as the transition from child salvation to child development,<sup>107</sup> is

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<sup>105</sup> Khiterer 2018: 168.

<sup>106</sup> Nelson, Fivush 2020: 91.

<sup>107</sup> Ben-Arieh 2014: 570.

recorded in the autobiographical consciousness of Jewish students in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The emotional significance of the child, represented by the demonstration of parental love and care for the daughter, partly correlates with the daughter's position in the hierarchy of children: from the oldest, to the youngest, to the only child. Sentimental child-centeredness specifies significant shifts in the awareness of the value of individuality in the relationship between the world of children and the world of adults in Jewish families.

The social significance of childhood is measured primarily by the success of the transition of the younger generations into adulthood. The goals and objectives of public education in the context of imperial modernization were aimed at the formation of a "human" and "citizen," which provided for the development of natural abilities of children regardless of gender. Guided by traditional views on motivating offspring to survive in the most difficult circumstances, Jewish parents took the gender realities of the modern period into account.

The image of childhood represented by the autobiographies of Jewish female students is an integral part of their training. The variability of home education of Jewish girls was determined by the property, socio-cultural and emotional-psychological circumstances of their families, which determined its duration, content, form of implementation, and pedagogical support. Despite the differences, it was common for Jewish families to carry out primary education for their daughters, both at home and in school.

The childhood of the Jewish daughters was concluded with an entry into public life, going outside the usual family environment, often outside of the family home. The beginning of schooling symbolized a milestone for girls, one marking the end of childhood and a carefree life. A marker of the end of childhood in the interpretation of the authors of autobiographies was their acquisition of a new state – the state of apprenticeship. The formalized parameter of apprenticeship was not age (the daughter reaching a certain number of years), but the semantic constant – the decision of Jewish parents on the expediency of starting their daughter's educational training.

Translated from Ukrainian by Mariia Maletka

## ABBREVIATIONS

DAK – Derzhavnyi arkhiv m. Kyieva [State Archives of Kyiv].

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